

Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4670

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SINGAPORE 0945

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CGEN

SUBJ: GOS CONCERN OVER OPERATIONS OF INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL
AFFAIRS

REF: STATE 035094 (AIDAC)

1. REFTEL ADVISED THAT JOSEPH W. MATHEWS, DIRECTOR, AND PATRICK MORIARTY, PROJECT OFFICER, OF THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, PLANNED TO VISIT A NUMBER OF EAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING SINGAPORE, TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR "PVO" ACTIVITIES, AND INSTRUCTED THE EMBASSY TO EXTEND APPROPRIATE COURTESIES. REFTEL INDICATED THEY WERE CARRYING LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM SENATOR PERCY.

2. IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER THESE GENTLEMEN EVER VISITED SINGAPORE SINCE THEY NEVER CONTACTED THE EMBASSY. HOWEVER, IT WILL BE OF INTEREST TO DEPARTMENT THAT LAST NOVEMBER ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESS HERE CARRIED ARTICLES REPORTING THAT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION WAS CONCERNED ABOUT A "DUBIOUS" AMERICAN-BASED RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION WHICH WAS PROSELYTIZING LOCAL TEACHERS. ONE ARTICLE SAID THIS "AMERICAN-BASED ORGANIZATION WAS RUN BY RESPECTABLE FOREIGNERS WHO WORK AS EXECUTIVES AND MANAGERS OF MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS. THE LEADERS DO NOT COME IN AS MISSIONARIES AND THIS MAKES DETECTION DIFFICULT. PERHAPS ITS THINKING AND TEACHINGS ARE NOT APPLICABLE TO SINGAPORE'S CONTEXT AND IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT A NUMBER OF TEACHERS HAVE

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BEEN PULLED IN AND USED." THE ARTICLE NOTED ORGANIZATION WAS

NOT A REGISTERED SOCIETY AND THAT THE GOS WAS LOOKING INTO ITS FINANCES.

3. ALTHOUGH THE PRESS DID NOT CITE THE NAME OF THIS ORGANIZATION, THE EMBASSY SUBSEQUENTLY LEARNED FROM PRESS SOURCES THAT THESE ARTICLES WERE REFERRING TO THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE AND ITS SUBSIDIARY ORGANIZATION, THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS. SHORTLY BEFORE THIS ADVERSE PUBLICITY, THE LOCAL ICA CHAPTER HAD PROPOSED TO THE AMERICAN BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE THAT IT ORGANIZE AN AMERICAN TOWN MEETING IN SINGAPORE FOR THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE ADVERSE PUBLICITY AND DOUBTS WHETHER THE ICA REPRESENTATIVES WOULD BE PERMITTED TO OPERATE IN SINGAPORE, THE BICENTENNIAL COMMITTEE DECIDED NOT TO ACCEPT THE PROPOSAL.

4. WITHIN THE PAST FEW DAYS THE EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IS STILL CONCERNED ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES OF AMERICANS IN SINGAPORE CONNECTED WITH ICA AND CONSIDERS THEIR ACTIVITIES TO BE ESSENTIALLY ANTI-ESTABLISHMENT.

5. ACTION REQUESTED. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT FORWARDING ASAP BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND COMMENT ON THE ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE AND THE ICA, THE NATURE OF ITS SPONSORSHIP AND WHETHER ITS PAST OR CURRENT ACTIVITIES OVERSEAS HAVE POSED DIFFICULTIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES. HOLDRIDGE

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